

NBC NIGHTLY NEWS  
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LEBANON/CIVIL  
CONFLICT

PALMER: American ships off Lebanon are on a kamikaze alert tonight because intelligence reports indicate Moslem fanatics might try to stage a spectacular attack against them. Here's Chris Wallace with details of administration plans to stop the terrorists.

WALLACE: A senior administration official says the U.S. is considering a preemptive strike to stop terrorists in Lebanon from flying kamikaze style airplane attacks against U.S. forces. The official said that recent intelligence indicates that Islamic fundamentalists in Lebanon now have light planes and helicopters capable of reaching U.S. positions. Officials said the planes are being supplied by Iran, and 'that this could not happen without Syrian acquiescence.' The senior official added that intelligence indicates the terrorists do not yet have pilots to fly the planes. Administration sources confirm that U.S. Marines in Beirut and ships off the coast were put on an increased state of readiness several days ago, after this intelligence was received. Officials say they are confident that U.S. air patrols can stop any attack by a plane filled with explosives. But they expressed two concerns: first, that a terrorist plane might fly near a civilian airliner to avoid radar detection; second, that there would be little time to react, since the terrorist planes are now a short distance from U.S. positions. Pentagon officials indicated just how seriously they take this threat. They say that E-2 surveillance planes are in the air constantly over the U.S. fleet. And the two F-14 fighters, with pilots in the cockpit, are primed to take off to intercept a terrorist plane, 24 hours a day. Chris Wallace, NBC News, at the White House.